

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

I claim:

1. (Original) A brace adapted to mount externally of a person's torso in order to support the person's back, comprising:

(A) a support piece including an elongated central portion and a plurality of pairs of oppositely projecting lobe portions extending laterally of said central portion, said lobe portions constructed of a stiff yet bendable material; and

(B) a support band sized and adapted to encircle the person's torso and operative to releasably secure said support piece alongside the person's back when in a mounted state, said support band constructed of a flexible material and having opposite end portions provided with cooperative fasteners whereby said end portions may be releasably secured together in a fastened state.

2. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 wherein said central portion includes a flexible material.

3. (Original) A brace according to claim 2 wherein each of said lobe portions is formed by a strip of the stiff yet bendable material secured to and extending transversely of said central portion.

4. (Original) A brace according to claim 3 wherein said strips extend perpendicularly to said central portion.

5. (Original) A brace according to claim 3 including a plurality of sleeves each formed of a flexible material and having a sleeve interior connected to said central portion with said sleeves receiving a respective said strip therein.

6. (Original) A brace according to claim 5 wherein at least some of said sleeves are oversized such that the respective said strip may move relative to its respective said sleeve within the interior thereof.

7. (Currently Amended) A brace according to claim 5 wherein said sleeves are in parallel spaced relation to one another.

8. (Original) A brace according to claim 3 wherein one of said strips is of a different width than another of said strips.

9. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 wherein the lobe portions of each said pair extend equidistantly of said central portion.

10. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 wherein said support piece is formed as a unitary one-piece construction of the stiff yet bendable material, said lobe portions being formed by notches located between adjacent ones of said lobe portions.

11. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 including at least three pairs of lobe portions, there being a primary pair of lobe portions and two secondary lobe portions, one on either side of said primary pair of lobe portions.

12. (Original) A brace according to claim 11 wherein said primary lobe portion is wider than said secondary lobe portions.

13. (Original) A brace according to claim 11 wherein the lobe portions of said primary pair extend a lateral distance away from said central portion that is greater than the lobe portions of said secondary pairs.

14. (Currently Amended) A brace according to claim 1 wherein said stiff yet bendable material is selected from a group consisting of: composite materials, plastic, aramid compounds, poly-para-phenylene terephthalamide, Kevlar®, graphite, plastic, ballistic-type materials and resin impregnated fabrics.

15. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 wherein said end portions of said support band are formed of a resiliently stretchy material.

16. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 wherein said support band includes a pouch that is formed of a flexible material and that is located medially of said end portions, said pouch having a pouch interior sized and adapted to receive said support piece.

17. (Original) A brace according to claim 14 wherein the pouch interior is oversized relative to said support piece whereby said support piece may undergo sliding movement therein.

18. (Original) A brace according to claim 17 wherein the pouch interior is oversized in a lateral dimension.

19. (Original) A brace according to claim 14 wherein said pouch is formed of a fabric material selected from a group consisting of substantially non-stretchy fabrics and resilient stretchy fabrics.

20. (Original) A brace according to claim 19 wherein said pouch and said end portions are formed of a common material.

21. (Original) A brace according to claim 14 wherein said pouch is provided with a releasable pouch closure.

22. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 wherein said cooperative fasteners permit size adjustment of said band.

23. (Original) A brace according to claim 1 including a sheath formed of a flexible material and having a sheath interior sized and adapted to receive said support piece, said band operative to releasably secure said sheath relative to the person's body.

24. (Original) A brace according to claim 21 wherein said sheath is constructed of a material selected from a group consisting of nylon, polyester, and PTFE coated materials.

25. (Original) A brace according to claim 21 wherein the sheath interior has a periphery contoured to the shape of said support piece.

26. (Original) A brace adapted to be releasably secured externally of a person's torso in order to support the person's back, comprising:

(A) a sheath formed and including first and second panels of a flexible material secured together around a perimeter thereof so as to have a sheath interior;

(B) a support piece sized and adapted to be received in the sheath interior, said support piece including an elongated central portion defining a length for said support piece and having a longitudinally extending central axis and a plurality of pairs of oppositely projecting lobe portions extending laterally of said central portion for a respective lobe length thereby to define a width for said

support piece, said lobe portions constructed of a stiff yet bendable material and each extending laterally for a respective lobe length relative to the central longitudinal axis.

27. (Original) A brace according to claim 26 wherein the lobe portions of each said pair extend equidistantly of said central portion.

28. (Original) A brace according to claim 26 wherein said support piece is formed as a unitary one-piece construction of the stiff yet bendable material, said lobe portions being formed by notches located between adjacent ones of said lobe portions.

29. (Original) A brace according to claim 26 including at least three pairs of lobe portions, there being a primary pair of lobe portions and two secondary lobe portions, one on either side of said primary pair of lobe portions.

30. (Original) A brace according to claim 28 wherein said primary lobe portion is wider than said secondary lobe portions.

31. (Original) A brace according to claim 28 wherein the lobe portions of said primary pair extend a lateral distance away from said central portion that is greater than the lobe portions of said secondary pairs.

32. (Currently Amended) A brace according to claim 26 wherein said stiff yet bendable material is selected from a group consisting of: composite materials, plastic, aramid compounds, poly-para-phenylene terephthalamide, ~~Kevlar®~~, graphite, plastic, ballistic-type materials and resin impregnated fabrics.